



Photo Credit: Gregory Dreizdon



### 36 Another Happy Ending...

When the heat is on, one man is called on to slam the door and put out the fire—Jose Mesa. Mesa has turned out many happy endings for Tribe fans in '95 while finding his own "happy ending" in his search for a pitching home.

### 46 Paul Sorrento—Doin' What It Takes

*by Bill Needle*  
Never were role players more fun to watch than those with the 1995 Indians, and Paul Sorrento is among the most exciting. With the potential to light up the sky with one swing of the bat, Sorrento has learned to make the most of his time between the white lines.

### 54 The Men In The Middle

*by Jim Ingraham*  
They are the unsung heroes of the 1995 Indians. Individual wins or saves are not their goal. The Indians four horsemen: Julian Tavarez, Eric Plunk, Jim Poole and Paul Assenmacher are the men in the middle of the Tribe's pitching staff and they're making a name—for everyone but themselves.

### 64 A Boy's Wonder

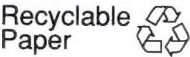
*by Tom Bochenek*  
The Indians have their very own boy wonder in Kenny Lofton. He is the total package—an offensive standout with speed, power and everything in between. And, as if that's not enough, he's becoming a role model for Cleveland youngsters.

### 88 A "Super Sub" Combination

*by Brian Love*  
Wayne Kirby and Alvaro Espinoza are the dynamic duo that are not only the backbone of the Indians bench, but the funny bone for the entire team.

1995 Cleveland Indians .....	91	Luncheon Information .....	42
1995 Indians Schedule .....	14	Memorable Moments .....	7
A Road Trip .....	10	Minor Leagues .....	30
AL/NL Directory .....	34	On Deck .....	8
Bottom of the Ninth .....	102	Parking .....	22
Broadcasters .....	80	Poster .....	52
Canton-Akron Schedule .....	30	Promotional Schedule .....	20
Catch The Fever! .....	7	Radio/TV Network .....	84
Community Relations .....	66	Scoring Blocks .....	61
Concessions .....	24	Scouting .....	32
Fan Conduct .....	28	Seating Diagram .....	20
Herb's Score Card .....	8	So, You Want To Work In	
How to Score .....	62	Baseball .....	6
In Focus .....	12	The Woman Behind the Mascot ..	6
Jacobs Field Facts .....	26	TEAM Effort .....	78
Kids Stuff .....	90	Ticket Information .....	14

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# Catch The Fever!

As the excitement builds in Cleveland, many fans have joined in on the fun by "expressing themselves."

Kudos to all those artistic fans who have really shown their loyalty to their team!



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If you haven't already heard, the Indians cable home, SportsChannel has been replaying all SC Indians telecasts later on in the evening, so if you saw a really exciting game, you can "relive" the highlights on SportsChannel!

Broadcast time varies depending on the event, but usually starts around midnight. The games are edited to fit into a two-hour time slot, but the beginning and ending are kept in tact.

Check out the Indians season schedule on page 14 of this program to find out the next evening a "Tribe Take Two" broadcast is on.

## Memorable Moments

We asked some of our Broadcast personalities to share the moments in their careers that really stand out in their minds...

### Michael Reghi

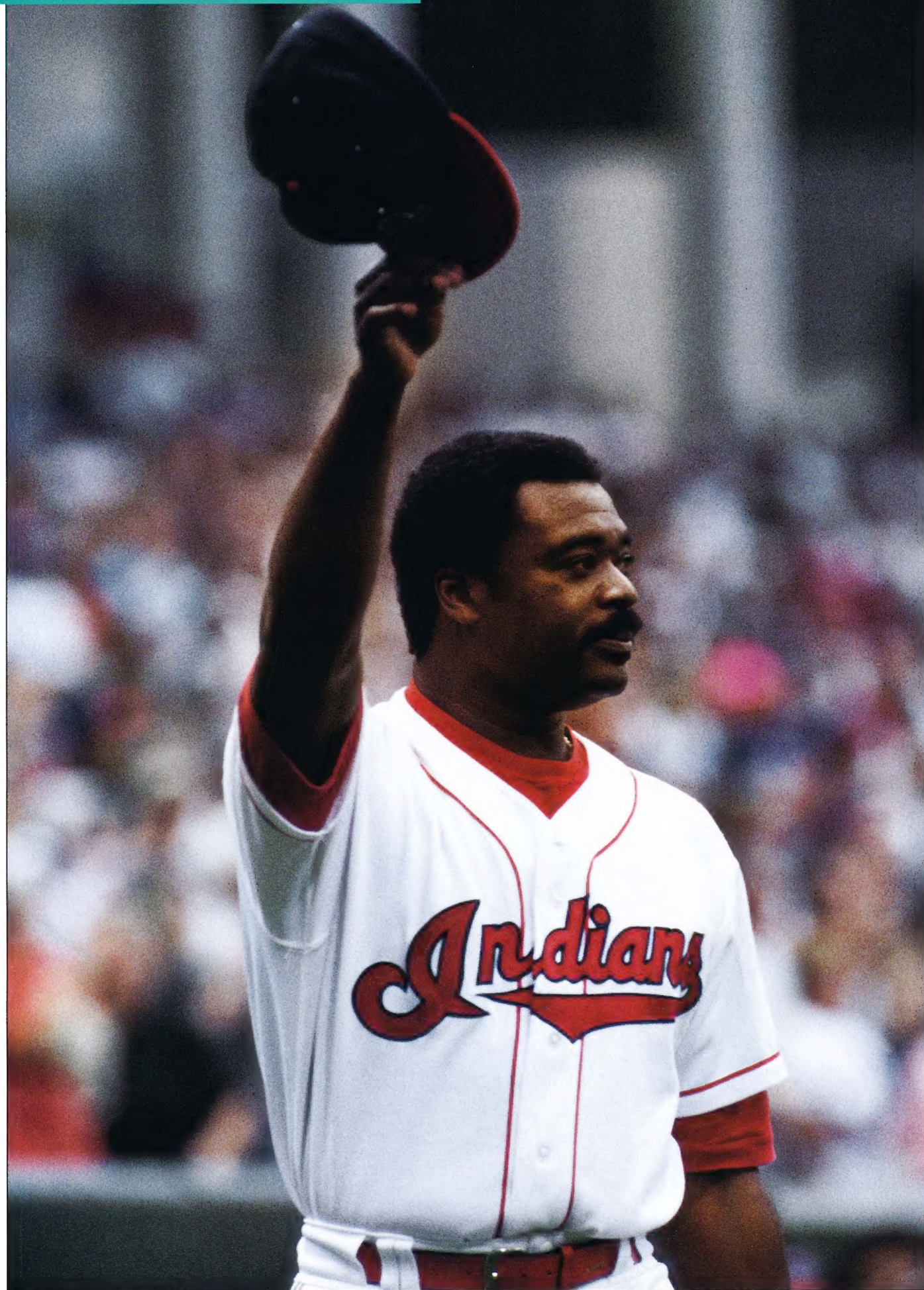
A member of the broadcasting team on SportsChannel, Reghi remembers a truly historic moment...

"The game that sticks out in my mind is April 8, 1993, the day that Carlos Baerga went yard against Steve Farr and Steve Howe in the same inning to set a big league record.

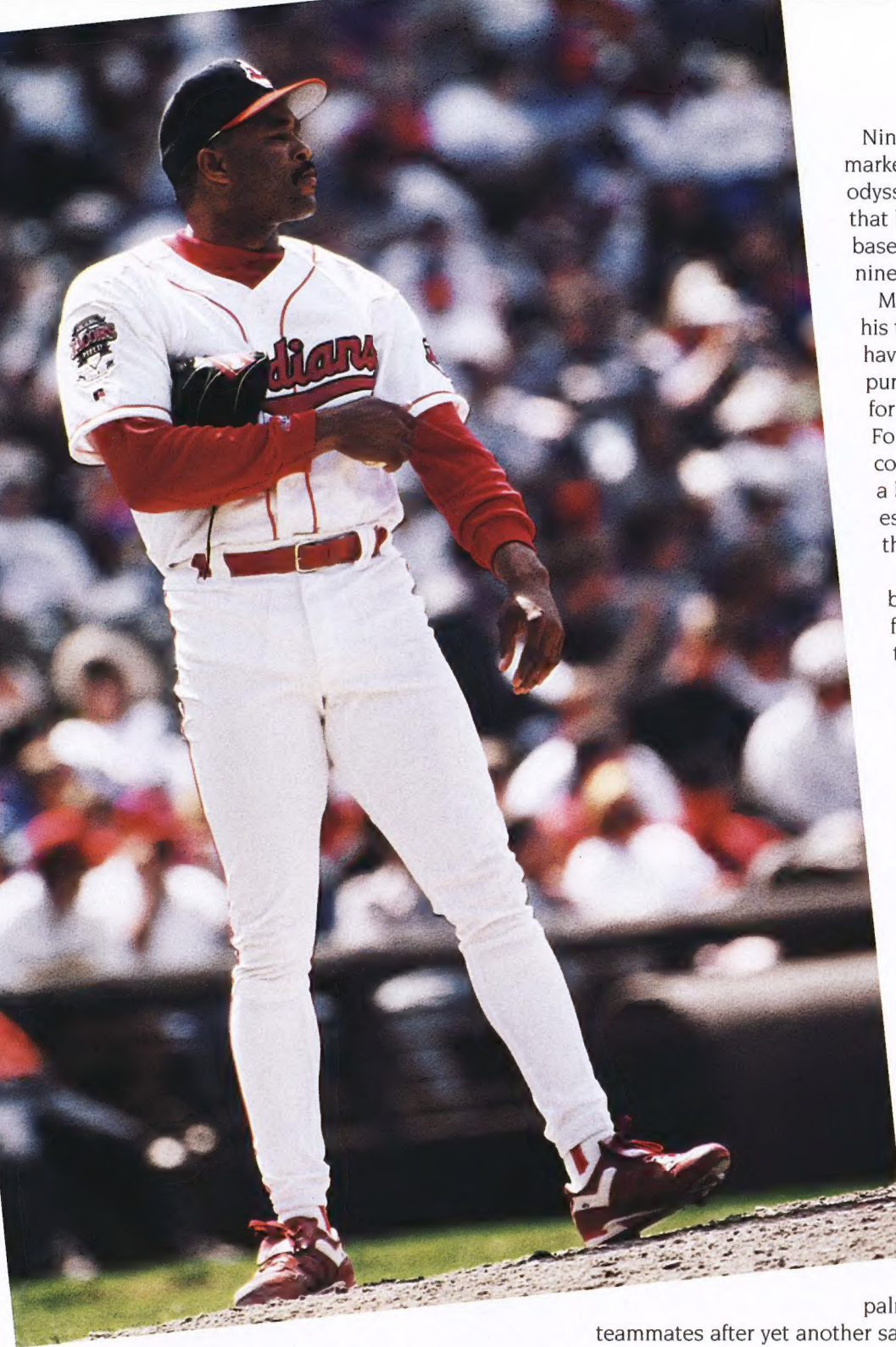
"Carlos did the pre-game show for us that day on SportsChannel, and it was real special to see him go out and set a new Major League mark the same day.



## THE 1995 CLEVELAND INDIANS







## Another Happy Ending...

Nineteen-ninety-five has marked the end of an odyssey for Jose Mesa, one that began 13 professional baseball seasons and nine cities ago.

Mesa's time and travels, his trials and tribulations, have been spent on one purpose: to find a niche for his blazing fastball. For Mesa, the journey's conclusion represents a beginning too, in essence, a new career, that of bullpen closer.

That is, one of baseball's premier closers for one of its elite teams.

"I'm having more fun pitching now than at any time in the past," Mesa recently said after he completed his pre-game running. "I hope this is what I'll do the rest of my career. It's pretty easy to pitch one inning. You might last longer, too."

If the Indians season were to be captured in snapshots, one would be of Mesa, walking toward center field at game's end, slapping

palms with a line of

teammates after yet another save.

"Jose has been coming in throwing strikes, and he has so good a fastball, that sometimes it's hard to catch," said Indians catcher Tony Pena. "He's so confident now, he feels he can come in and get everybody out, and that's what he's been doing."

Mesa, a 29-year-old righthander, had been a starting pitcher prior to last season. Now, he enters the stretch drive of this season with a shot at Doug Jones' team record for saves (43 in 1990) and an opportunity to lead the American League in the same category.

Mesa's excellence has helped put the Tribe in posi-

© Gregory Drezdson



tion to earn its first championship of any kind since winning the American League pennant in 1954.

"Jose throws 96 miles per hour. He's a strike thrower," Indians Manager Mike Hargrove said. "Anytime you have somebody as dominant as Jose has been for us as your closer, it makes the team play more relaxed."

"When you're a talented team and can play more relaxed, you'll be more productive. Jose has always had the stuff. I don't know if he always believed he could do it."

Any self-doubting on Mesa's part would have been from his stay with the Baltimore Orioles. The native of Azua, Dominican Republic, had signed with the Toronto Blue Jays as a 15-year-old in 1982. After pitching for five teams in the Toronto farm system, Mesa was traded to Baltimore with Oswald Peraza for Mike Flanagan on August 31, 1987.

Mesa pitched for the Orioles that September, and for parts of 1990, '91 and '92, before he was traded to the Indians for minor league outfielder Kyle Washington on July 14, 1992.

With Baltimore, Mesa made 47 starts in 49 appearances, and went 13-24 with a 5.40 earned run average.

"I was a hard thrower. When you're a hard thrower, people expect a lot," Mesa said. "If you saw the record I had in the past, you'd see I never had a good record with the Orioles."

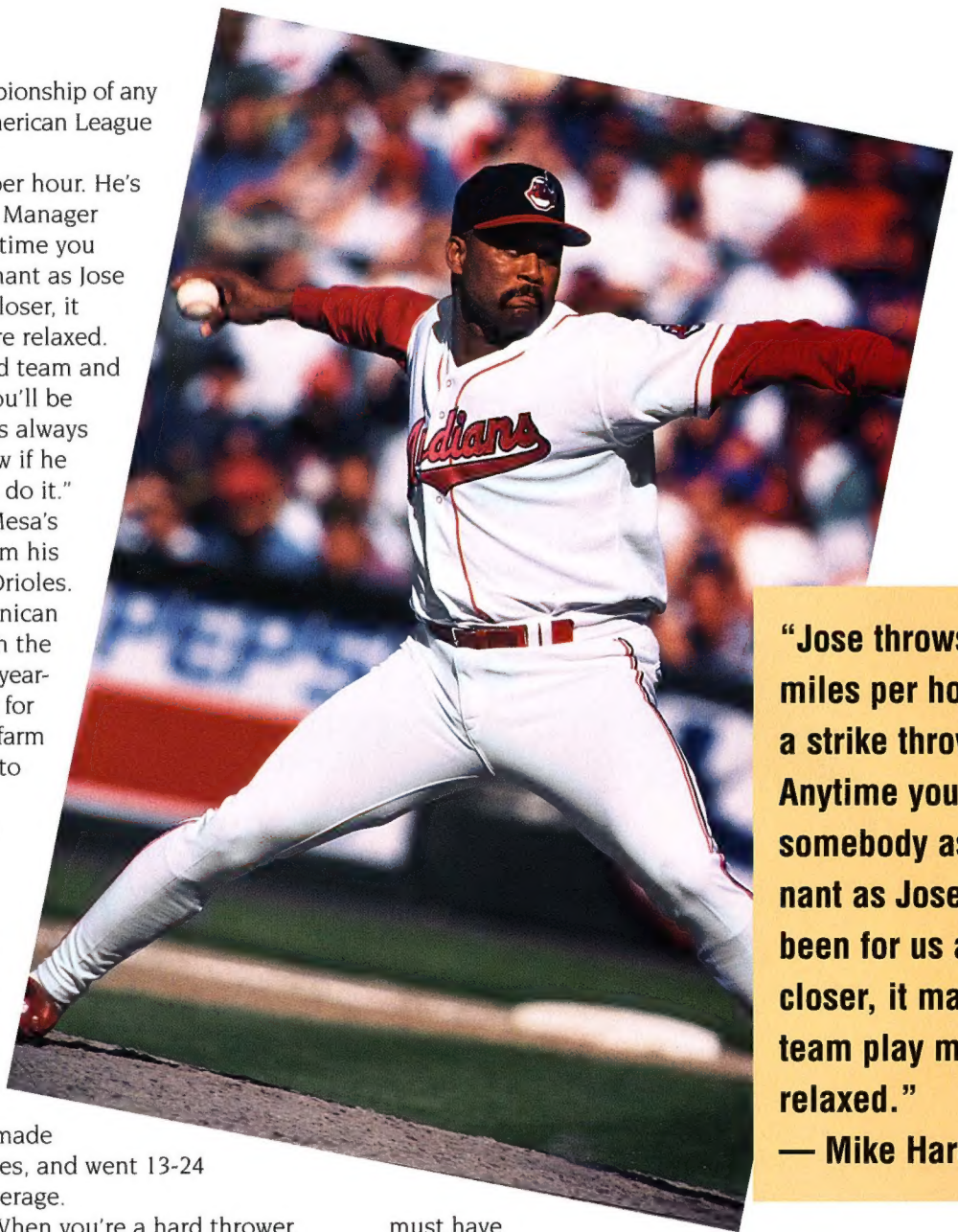
"With Baltimore, they expected me to have success, but sometimes I'd pitch once every 12 or 15 days."

It didn't help that Mesa had injury problems. Being 6'3" and a solid 225 pounds, does a pitcher little good if his arm is hurting.

"I had surgeries in '88 and '89," recalled Mesa, who was limited to 21 appearances with farm teams Rochester and Hagerstown during those seasons. "I had bone chips first, then I had to have a ligament replaced in my elbow."

"God helped me come back from the surgeries. I think I can throw as hard now as ever. There aren't too many pitchers who come back from that elbow surgery."

Mesa had some success with the Indians as a starter in 1992 and 1993. He was 14-16 with a 4.68 earned run average in 49 games, including 48 starts. The Indians



**"Jose throws 96 miles per hour. He's a strike thrower. Anytime you have somebody as dominant as Jose has been for us as your closer, it makes the team play more relaxed."**  
— Mike Hargrove

must have felt, though, that they could get more out of Mesa. He's a coachable player with a lot of talent, and a strong work ethic.

"Jose threw some good games for us in the rotation, and it was decided he could help in the bullpen," said Mark Wiley, in his first season back as the Indians pitching coach after holding the job from 1988-1991, then serving as a special assignment scout for three years.

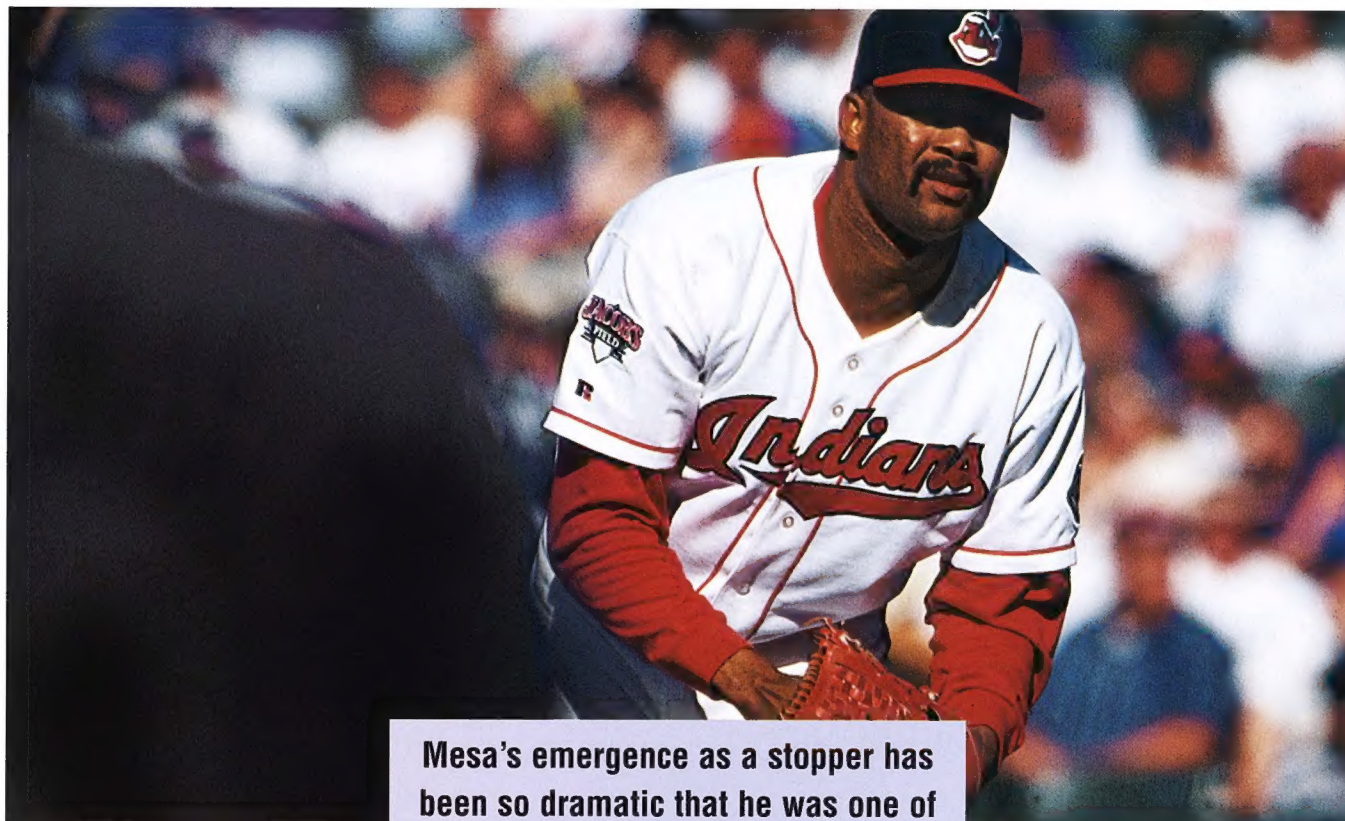
"It was based on the kind of stuff he has, the power stuff he has. And we felt the experience he had would give him a good background for learning the role."

Mesa flourished last season. Used mostly in the seventh and eighth innings, he was second in the American League in relief appearances (51) and innings (73), and tied for third in relief wins (7).

"Last year, I didn't like relieving as much," Mesa said. "I had problems learning how to warm up quickly."

Despite his effectiveness, Mesa was able to save just





© Gregory Drezdov

**Mesa's emergence as a stopper has been so dramatic that he was one of six Indians selected for the American League All-Star team. He had 21 saves in as many opportunities at the All-Star break, had won his only decision and carried a 1.84 ERA.**

two games in six opportunities. Nobody on the Indians, though, had over five saves in 1994. For a team with championship potential, not having a reliable closer was like the Mona Lisa wearing a frown.

The Indians organization had worked too hard to have their prototype team marred by the absence of a bullpen stopper. GM John Hart and his associates explored trade possibilities for a proven closer, and considered prospects in the farm system.

What they came up with was hope, and a reasonable expectation, that the big guy with the friendly face and "49" on the back of his jersey could do the job.

"John Hart asked me if I'd like to pitch late in the game," Mesa said. "I said I'd have no trouble with it. He said, 'That's what we're going to find out.'"

The Indians haven't built a winner by accident. They have exercised forethought, as they did with Mesa.

"Last year, Phil Regan came up with the idea of putting Jose in the bullpen and maybe making him a closer sometime, and to teach Jose how to throw a two-seamer," Hargrove said.

"We floated the idea to Jose last year and let him adjust to it mentally. We didn't just throw him into it out of the blue."

Phil Regan, now Baltimore's manager, was the Indians pitching coach last year. The two-seam fastball he taught Mesa acts as a sinker, and is a perfect complement to the straighter, but harder, four-seam fastball Mesa throws.

"Two different fastballs, and Jose is comfortable throwing either one for strikes," Wiley said. "He uses his slider and curveball effectively."

So the talent and the proper approach were in place for Mesa to surface as the team's closer.

The hardest part of any experiment, though, is getting it done. A game in May gave Mesa the assurance that it would work.

"It was a situation for me in Toronto with the bases loaded and one out—Ed Sprague was the hitter, and we were ahead by a run," Mesa recalled, as his smile turned into a game face look. "I got him to hit a grounder to (shortstop) Omar Vizquel for a double play, and that was the game."

"That's a game I will never forget. I thought we would lose, and we won. No doubt about it, that was *the* game."

Mesa's emergence as a stopper has been so dramatic that he was one of six Indians selected for the American League All-Star team. He had 21 saves in as many opportunities at the All-Star break, had won his only decision, and carried a 1.84 ERA.

Mesa pitched one inning in the Mid-Summer Classic, retiring all three hitters and striking out one.

"I'm real excited about it," Mesa said of his All-Star recognition. "The first time in my whole career. Not even in the minors did I make an All-Star team. There are a lot of good closers, and they picked me to be one of them. It's special."

The entire Indians bullpen gets much of the credit for





Señor Slam

*Gregory Drezdton*



# *Kenny Lofton: A Boy's Wonder*





By Tom Bochenek

If, indeed, "baseball brings out the little kid in all of us," then Kenny Lofton should, indeed, serve as the game's poster child. And, if that's the case, then no other days bring out the little kid in Lofton more than Saturdays and Sundays at Jacobs Field.

The reason is simple. Children. Oh sure, thousands of youngsters are among the capacity crowds that daily filter into the Indians sparkling new ballpark, but the weekend home games give Lofton a youth renaissance while offering youngsters a chance to learn about baseball from one of its premier stars.

Saturdays and Sundays are All Sport/Smucker's Kenny's Kids Press Conference days at Jacobs Field. Fifty youngsters, 25 of whom are selected at random from the crowd at Saturday's game (when the press conference is taped for showing during Sunday's game) and 25 from the Boys and Girls Club, get the chance to participate in a question and answer session with Lofton and a special guest player. The conference is shown on the JumboTron prior to Sunday games and airs live on Sports-RADIO WKNR.

The press conference is a learning experience about the game and the good ways of life for the youngsters, however, in return, Lofton gains some insight into what kids are thinking in the 90s. In effect, he learns what messages he wants to deliver to the kids. Above all, the Indians two-time All-Star centerfielder is the one who gets the most satisfaction from moderating the get-together. It shows.

"I do (get enjoyment) because I get an idea of what kids are thinking," said Lofton. "Also, I guess the biggest message is to let them know there's more out there than what you see. So, look around and you'll find it.

"I try to let kids know that there's more out there than trouble. You've got kids in gangs, drugs, situations like that, and there are a lot of things I try to hit toward the inner city. These kids don't get many chances to come to games and see the players (Kenny purchases 50 tickets for distribution to inner city youths for each Saturday home game).

When the conferences are over, the little kid in Lofton

takes over. He bounces out and reaches to each child for a high-five. It's as if he tells them, "hey, I'm a kid, too."

But, a role model? "I try to be," said Lofton. "I try to do the right things, but sometimes a situation comes up where you have to decide what's right and wrong. And, that's what I try to teach kids."

Take away the wispy hairs that form a mustache and the exuberance of youth glows on Lofton's soft face. He's 28 years old, but Kenny plays with a gliding style that brings back summertime memories of one's youth on the sandlots when playing ball was an all day rite. That glide to his gallop makes it seem as if his swift legs never touch the ground, like a jet streaking above the clouds. It's called cruise control. And, like an Indians slugger at bat, when Lofton gets on base, you don't leave your seat for the concession stands. You don't want to miss the speed of nature in action.

True, Lofton's game is built on his legs. But, as his 1994 stats and 1995 mid-season numbers attest, Kenny's power surge at the plate has added to his offensive package. Lofton, who hit six home runs in his first two seasons with the



Tribe (five in 1992, one in 1993), hit 12 homers a year ago and was on that pace at this year's All-Star break with five roundtrippers.

Lofton's ability to "turn on a pitch" stretches the defense and allows his characteristic style to be on even more display.

Teams can't favor a particular way of playing Lofton. With outfielders now respecting his power potential, simple flairs hit into shallow center field are doubles, shots down the lines are sure triples (he leads the American League in triples this year)

**If indeed, "baseball brings out the little kid in all of us," then Kenny should, indeed, serve as the game's poster child.**



and, with infielders now playing back on their heels, except for the third baseman who can almost shake hands with Lofton, drag bunts are there for the taking (he had 65 bunt hits from 1992-94).

"I think they (defenses) are playing me a little deeper than they did in years before," Lofton acknowledged the impact of his home run hitting capability. "They see I have power and now they have to make an adjustment. That's what this game is all about, makin' adjustments, and other teams have been doing it."

"Kenny Lofton is hitting the ball out in front of him," hitting coach Charlie Manuel told *The Plain Dealer* last year when his homer outbreak occurred. "When you do that, good things happen. He's not overswinging or trying to jerk the ball. Everything is nice and smooth."

For the 1995 version of Lofton, it's a matter of keeping intact the standard of excellence he has strung together since becoming the every day center-fielder for the Tribe in 1992. He was acquired from Houston in December, 1991 along with

infielder Dave Rhode for pitcher Willie Blair and catcher Ed Taubensee in, appropriately, one of the great "steals" of a trade ever made by the Indians. Even before he stole his first base or made one of his patented full steam catches in the gaps for the Tribe, Lofton's arrival in Cleveland was greeted by *The Plain Dealer* in its December 11, 1991 headline by: "Indians get 'impact-type' centerfielder."

That impact has included the following:

- \* Three consecutive stolen base titles, with 196 swipes, the most in the Majors from 1992-94. With three straight titles, Lofton became just the third American League player to lead the league in steals in his first three seasons, joining Minnie Minoso (1951-53) and Luis Aparicio (1956-58).
- \* Two consecutive Rawlings Gold Glove Awards, the symbol of Major League defensive greatness. Lofton became the first Indians player to win the award in back-to-back seasons since catcher Ray Fosse

in 1970 and '71. He tied Minnesota's Kirby Puckett for the AL lead with 13 outfield assists last year, and over the past three seasons, has nailed 38 baserunners with throws.

- \* In the history of baseball, Lofton is one of three players (and the only one in this century) ever to bat .285 or higher in his first season as a Major League regular and then improve his average by at least 20 points in each of the next two seasons (minimum 400 at-bats each year). The others were Elmer Flick and Honus Wagner who did it from 1898 to 1900.
- \* In 1994, he was among the league leaders in 11 offensive categories, including leading the AL in hits

(160), reaching a level of consistency that enabled him to place fourth in the AL Most Valuable Player balloting behind such prodigious sluggers as Frank Thomas, Ken Griffey Jr. and teammate Albert Belle.

"Most guys have their own routine of what they need to do to get better and feel comfortable about certain situations," Lofton

said of his goal of maintaining his level of play. "That's what a lot of guys are doing—knowing what you need to do to get better and staying with it."

Understanding that concept, Lofton doesn't pay attention to his numbers. Inevitably, comparisons are made with the likes of Oakland's Rickey Henderson as one of the game's predominant leadoff hitters and, overall, most valuable players to his team.

"I look at it as a compliment as well as a stepping stone for myself," Lofton said. "Rickey has already established himself and I'm still trying to get where he's at. Hopefully, in a couple of years I'll be at that status. Until then, I have to keep working at it."

Lofton keeps working at a game in which he is a relative novice. He was a standout pitcher and centerfielder at Washington High School in East Chicago, IN, and an All-State guard in basketball. He stayed in hoops and accepted a basketball scholarship at the University of Arizona, where he was the sixth man (and teammate of





Chicago Bulls guard Steve Kerr) on the 1988 Wildcat team that reached the Final Four. He joined Arizona's baseball team, was used mostly as a pinch runner and had one official at-bat in college. But, Houston Astros scout Clark Crist saw Lofton play in an intrasquad game, and despite glitches in all parts of his game, was overwhelmed by his speed. The Astros selected Lofton in the 17th round of the June 1988 amateur draft.

"Like I've been saying the last three or four years, there is something that I learn every day about the game," Lofton said. "Hopefully, I will the rest of my career. I don't think I'll ever say that I've learned everything there is to know about baseball because there are a lot of new situations that come up that can teach me a few things."

Lofton's work ethic is most noticeable in the outfield where he has parlayed his speed and experience into better positioning in center field. That positioning, in turn, has enabled him to get the jumps for those patented wall-climbing grabs and classic Willie Mays over-the-shoulder catches.

"As he's gotten experience and gotten to know the hitters in the league," said former Tribe center-fielder Rick Manning, "you can see that he's starting to play a little more shallow than he used to. That comes from getting to know your pitchers and getting to know situations where you can afford to come in.

"Kenny's made some outstanding catches in his career," said Manning, a Rawlings Gold Glove Award winner (1976). "And, he's going to make even more in the future. He's becoming more familiar with different hitters and situations. He's also gotten to know (leftfielder) Albert Belle and what to go for. Early in their career, they had a communication problem that's gone away, and now he's getting used to Manny Ramirez (in right field).

"You work as a unit out there, and the centerfielder is the captain. Kenny's been doing a great job and that's why he has two gold gloves."

Manning says Lofton's most noticeable improvement as a fielder is in an area that few can actually see.

"I think he jumps on the ball as it comes off the bat," said Manning. "It takes time to read off the bat, and Kenny gets some excellent jumps. That's from working on it. Now he's starting to feel more comfortable with his surroundings, he's playing more shallow and getting to know the ballparks."

Kenny Lofton's comfort zone takes place when he manufactures situations that benefit the Indians in many ways. From his gold glove on defense to world-class speed on the bases to his multi-talented skills at

the plate, Lofton's tangibles are on full view.

There is the intangible impact that Lofton can have on a ballgame, too. In a 0-0 game against Seattle last month, Mariners starter Salomon Torres was cruising, when, with two outs, Lofton singled. Just the sight of No. 7 at first base sends

chills through a pitcher's bones. Distraction has set in. That well-known, aggressive lead forced Torres to throw to first base twice, which broke up his rhythm on the mound. Torres lost control of the strike zone, and, with a pitch-out included in order to keep Kenny on first, he walked Omar Vizquel.

Lofton jumped and dodged around at second base, like kids do in that famous rundown game "cheesebox." He threatened to take

off for third base on any pitch. Torres lost his concentration, and Carlos Baerga hit a single to right field. Lofton scored easily, like he always seems to with that smooth gliding style.

Mission accomplished, run scored, thanks to the destructive, yet subtle nature of Kenny Lofton. It's Sunday and Kenny's Kids are jumping for joy. Their man is playing the game just as their dreams envision. Ahh, for the days of youth.



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**True, Lofton's game is built on his legs. But as his 1994 stats and '95 mid-season numbers attest, Kenny's power surge at the plate has added to his offensive package.**



by Bill Needle

With Paul Sorrento, it's always something with a bat. Even on defense. Watch him practice sometime.

Tribe infield coach Buddy Bell stands near second base with his trusty fungo bat. Sorrento stands at first, as if there were a close play on a ground ball. But instead of a throw with a runner pounding down the line, Bell lashes a wicked fungo shot at Sorrento's feet, as if an Indians infielder had unleashed a throw in the dirt. More often than not, Sorrento makes the scoop. Just like he does in the games.

On an offensive powerhouse like the Indians, Paul Sorrento's bat might get lost, even though many observers contend he could hit cleanup for a lot of other teams. So Sorrento works on his glove, with the help of Buddy Bell's fungo bat.

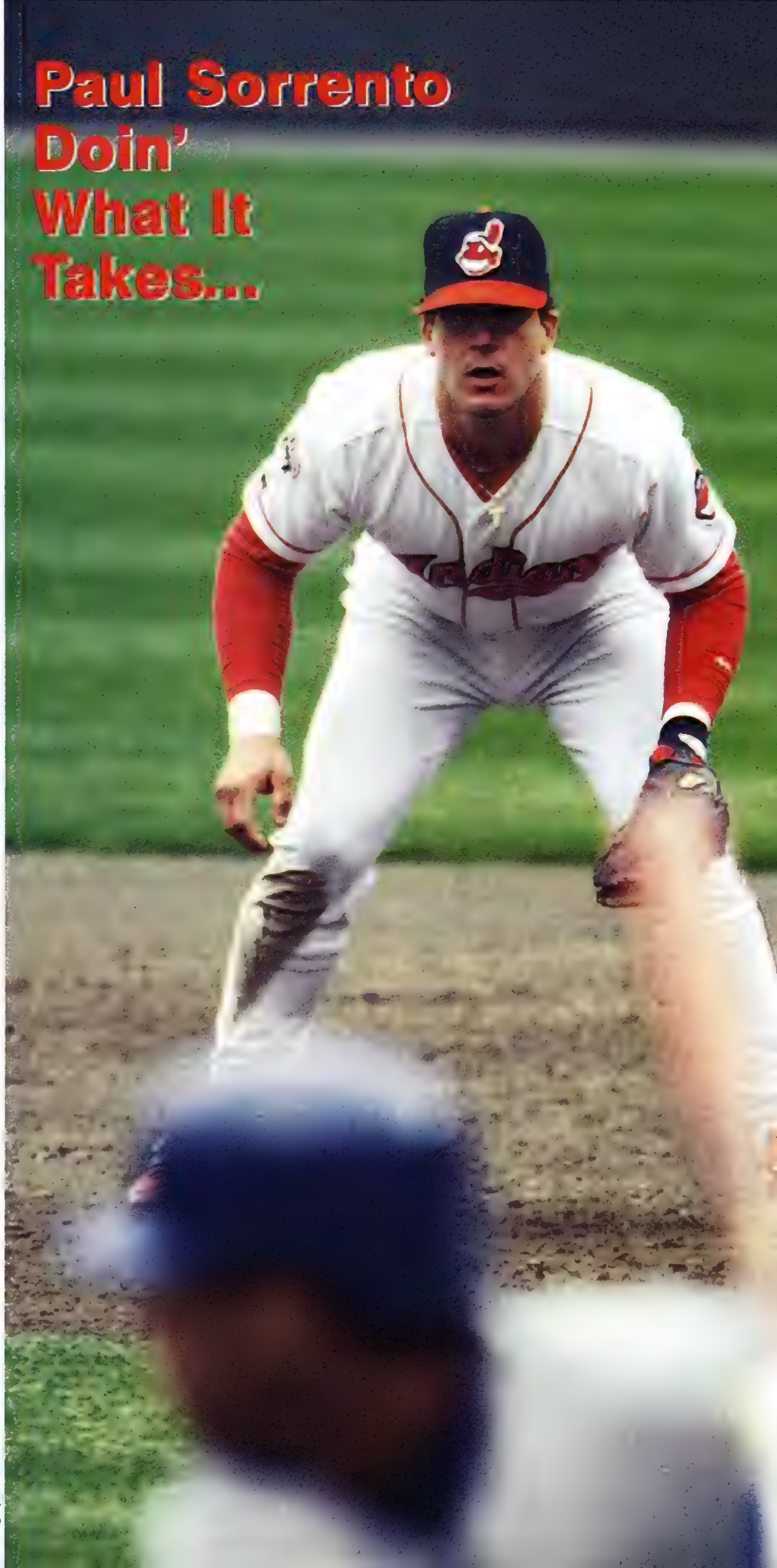
"I was originally an outfielder," Sorrento said. "It's not like I'm learning a new position anymore. I'm pretty comfortable at first. But at this level, you have to work every day, no matter how comfortable you feel."

Buddy Bell's bat may help Sorrento's defense, but his own bat needs little outside assistance.

As the Indians tore through the American League at the start of the season, Sorrento was leading the charge. In the first six weeks of the season, he hit 12 homers, averaging one home-run every seven trips to the plate. Babe Ruth averaged a homer every dozen at-bats.

For every homer Sorrento hit, another hundred fans wondered why he was being platooned, playing only against right-handed pitching. Through late July, the platooning of Sorrento was the only Tribe issue that seemed even remotely controversial as the Indians built a double-digit lead over their closest Central Division rival.

## Paul Sorrento Doin' What It Takes...





Sorrento wanted to play every day, just as every athlete with a competitive nature and an abundance of self-confidence wants to play every day. But instead of making waves, Sorrento put his personal wishes aside, kept his feelings to himself and kept an Indians season that has been a cruise on the QE2 from becoming a ride on the Titanic.

"I've accepted my situation for the good of the team," he said. "I could moan about it. But winning cures a lot of headaches. Why mess with the success we're having?"

There are a pair of other reasons that keep Sorrento on an even keel about his playing time, too. One is the responsibility that comes with being a newlywed. Sorrento and his wife, Melissa, were married last October. The second perspective broadener came prior to the marriage. Sorrento's mother passed away in June of 1994.

"It took me a good month to where my mom's passing wasn't on my mind every day," he said. "I thought I'd be able to block it out and play last year. But I couldn't. It was a big blow. It was the first time I'd ever lost someone so close to me."

Sorrento's father, Tony, remains his son's biggest fan. "He was a good kid," said the elder Sorrento. "He had his moments like all kids do, but overall, a father couldn't ask for a better son."

"I used to give him five dollars for every homer he hit when he was young," Tony Sorrento added. "After a while, those five-dollar bills added up."

Sorrento spent his five-dollar rewards in the Boston area, where he was born in November of 1965. An all-around athlete in high school at St. John's Prep in Danvers, MA, Sorrento attracted attention as a high school football fullback and linebacker and also as a hockey player. But he preferred baseball.

But there was a problem. Sorrento's high school baseball exposure was limited because of the short time

between Massachusetts's spring thaw and the end of the school year. The high school baseball season in Boston lasts about as long as it takes one of Sorrento's homers to reach the right field seats at Jacobs Field. Not very long.

Enter a pair of former Red Sox. One is a neighbor and family friend. The other is the co-proprietor of a New Hampshire baseball camp Sorrento attended as a youth.

The neighbor is former Sox infielder Mike Andrews. The baseball camp operator is Jerry Moses, a former Sox catcher who operated the camp along with Andrews.

"We thought Paul could play Major League ball," Andrews said. "Jerry and I wrote to most of the big-time college baseball programs, saying we felt Paul could play. We got letters back telling us to get a scout to evaluate him and fill out a report."

Perennial powerhouse Florida State offered Sorrento a partial scholarship, not a form to fill out.

"When a guy like Mike Andrews pushes a kid who isn't a relative, he's worth a look," said Seminole baseball coach

Mike Martin. "We took Paul without having seen him."

Florida State's gamble paid off.

By the end of Sorrento's freshman year, he was the 'Noles' regular rightfielder. By his junior year, according to Martin, "he was the straw that stirred the drink."

As a senior, Sorrento led FSU to the Finals of the College World Series and was named to Baseball America's Second Team All-America squad.

Sorrento was drafted in the fourth round of the 1986 Free Agent Draft by the Angels and exploded into the pro baseball world by hitting .356 in 53 games for Quad Cities in the Midwest Rookie League.

His hitting in Quad Cities earned him a promotion to Class A Palm Springs of the California League later in that 1986 campaign. Unfortunately, his career rise slowed somewhat after the elevation in play.



© Gregory Drezdorn, both photos



cutting the Toronto lead to 8-6 by the bottom of the ninth. After Albert Belle singled and scored on Jim Thome's fielder's choice to make the score 8-7, Sorrento put Hall's first pitch fastball into the right field seats at Jacobs Field for a 9-8 Cleveland victory.

"That comeback was an unbelievable feeling and a tribute to the fans who wouldn't give up," Sorrento said afterwards. "When I first hit it, I thought it was way out. But the wind kind of swirled. It was weird. I looked out, and I had to start running a bit."

That early June homer by Sorrento has now become an accepted part of the lore of the 1995 Indians. Should the club experience greater success as the season continues, Sorrento's blast might take on Ruthian dimensions—he called his shot, the ball splintered a tree in the picnic area, he literally knocked the cover off the ball. By the end of the decade, who knows how people



© Gregory Drezdron

will refer to Paul Sorrento's dramatic clout?

One thing is for certain, though. After a struggle through the minor leagues and a struggle for at-bats in the Majors, Paul Sorrento has arrived as a full-fledged member of one of baseball's best teams.

"In the minors, Paul always had size and strength," said Boston Red Sox Manager Kevin Kennedy. "But sometimes you wondered, 'What happened to that guy?' Now, he's hitting the ball a long way."

And everybody who knows baseball knows exactly where Paul Sorrento is—a big part of baseball's most formidable offense. As for Sorrento, he hopes he'll find himself playing well into the post-season.

After all, now that he's married, he's got a 1991 World Series ring for whom he'd love to find a mate.

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Minnesota for Sorrento. He began paying dividends almost immediately.

In '92, Sorrento hit .269 with 18 homers and 60 RBI. In '93, he batted .257 with 18 more homers and 65 RBI and in the shortened 1994 campaign, he was on pace to exceed the two previous seasons—he hit 14 homers and drove in 62 runs when play ended in August.

With the 1995 Indians, Sorrento's role is well-known. Against right-handed pitching, he plays first base, gets an occasional start at DH, and hits seventh or eighth. Against lefties, he gives way to either Herbert Perry or Eddie Murray at first and to Murray or Dave Winfield in the DH slot.

"Last year, I think I made some strides hitting lefties and got my confidence up," Sorrento said. "If you ask any player, he'll tell you he wants to play every day.

"But with the type of offense we have, winning is the



whole point. When you win, everything else gets thrown out the window. It just doesn't matter if the team wins."

And have no doubts about it, the Indians have been winning. Their surge to the top of the AL Central has been impressive. And no dramatic finish—not Manny Ramirez's 10th

inning homer to beat the Bosox in June, not Albert Belle's grand slam to top the Angels in July or Ramirez's 12th inning shot off Dennis Eckersley two days before—exceeded the drama of Sorrento's ninth inning homer off Toronto's Darren Hall on June 4.

Devoted Tribe fans know the story, a large part of the saga that has been the 1995 campaign.

The Blue Jays scored seven runs in the first inning and led by as much as 8-0 behind the pitching of 1994 Cy Young Award winner David Cone.

The Indians started chipping away in the third inning,

# Focus on the game, not on focusing.



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### MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL AND THE INDIANS MAKE "TEAM" A WINNER



Baseball's most important pitch this season won't come from a mound. In an effort to combat drinking and driving, Major League Baseball, together with the Techniques for Effective Alcohol Management (TEAM) coalition, will make comprehensive appeal to fans this year. The message:

**PLEASE DON'T  
DRINK AND DRIVE.**

Major League Baseball joined TEAM in 1987. Fourteen organizations are now members of the coalition, representing professional sports, federal and state agencies and private industry. In addition to Major League Baseball, Allstate Insurance Company, CBS Sports, Comsat Video Enterprises, the International Association of Auditorium Managers, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association, the National Association of Broadcasters, the National Association of Governor's Highway Safety Representatives, the National Basketball Association, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the National Traffic Safety Administration, the National Hockey League and the National Safety Council are members.

TEAM was established to accomplish two objectives:

- Assist ballparks and arenas in the development of alcohol management policies and procedures.
- Conduct public service campaigns that reinforce awareness of the dangers associated with drinking and driving. These campaigns promote the value of a designated driver and the importance of responsible drinking.

As part of the TEAM program, each Major

League club has reviewed and altered its alcohol policies. The size of the cup and the number of beers a customer can purchase have been drastically reduced. Many clubs now cut off beer sales before the game ends and nearly half do not vend beer in the stands. Alcohol-free sections are commonplace in many parks. Every club is running public service announcements asking fans to drink responsibly and warning them against the consequences of drinking and driving.

The results have been encouraging. The number of alcohol-related incidents in and around baseball parks has dropped.

Baseball's efforts also include a multi-media public service announcement campaign that promoted "TEAM Spirit" on television during network telecasts of regular and post-season games. TEAM PSA's over the years have featured Tommy Lasorda, Mark Langston, Shane Rawley, Chili Davis and Don Baylor encouraging fans not to drink and drive.

The Indians have also jumped on the bandwagon when it comes to safe, responsible drinking at Jacobs Field. All hosts, guest service personnel, security guards, ticket sellers and parking lot attendants are trained in spotting the signs of intoxication among fans and how to control and prevent alcohol-related incidents. In addition, there are banners behind concession stands encouraging fans to drink responsibly and to choose a designated driver in their group. Those interested in participating in the Designated Driver program, **sponsored by A1 General**, may sign up at Guest Service Centers, Section 116 of the Main Concourse or Section 519 of the Upper Concourse, to receive a free soft drink certificate, a wristband saying they aren't purchasing alcohol and a chance to win a Tribe cap from the Indians Team Shop.





for the closer should be a priority for every team," Hargrove says.

"It's like being a utility player," says Jim Poole, who is one-quarter of the Indians four-man middle relief corps. "There are moments where your job is important, but rarely do you stand the chance of getting any glory. A starter can throw well for six or seven innings, and then the closer pitches the ninth, but it's the guys in between who nobody notices in the box score. Our credo is the less we see our names, the better. Usually, the only time a middle reliever sees his name is if something bad happens."

Poole, who has a degree in electrical engineering from Georgia Tech, has the perfect temperament for a middle reliever: unexcitable and almost without ego.

"There's no place for an ego in middle relief," he said. "If you do have one, you'll probably get it popped early."

Poole and Paul Assenmacher form the left-handed half of the Indians perfectly-balanced middle relief corps.

The righthanders are Eric Plunk and Julian Tavarez.

Any one of the four can be the first out of the bullpen when a starter runs out of gas in a given game. Some games only one middle reliever will be needed to relay the lead from the starter to closer Jose Mesa. Some games, all four are needed.

If everybody is doing their job, Mesa will only have to pitch one inning, three outs, to seal the deal.

"Without them, I couldn't do my job," Mesa said. "It helps a lot knowing I'll only have to pitch one inning each time."

That has not always been the case.

As the art of bullpen construction has been refined through the years, the closer's workload has been reduced from two and sometimes two-plus innings in order to earn a save, to the much-preferred one inning. It's a formula the Oakland A's used to perfection in the late 80s, when manager Tony La Russa would rarely, if ever, bring in closer Dennis Eckersley before the ninth inning. Only a sturdy group of middle relievers provided La Russa with that luxury.

The quality of the Indians middle relief corps is evident by the fact that in the overwhelming majority of Mesa's appearances this season, he has been asked to pitch one inning, and one inning only.

**middle**

© Gregory Drezdorn, both photos



By Jim Ingraham

What's that?

You say you want to be a middle reliever when you grow up?

Are you sure?

Do you know what you'd be getting yourself into?

Here's a brief description: If you enjoy doing a lot of hard work while others get all the glory, then middle relief is for you.

If your ego doesn't require seeing your name in headlines two or three times a week, middle relief is for you.

If you don't need to pile up lots of saves and/or victories to know you're pitching good, you might be a middle reliever.

If you don't mind being one of the lowest paid players on the team, then you might, indeed, be a candidate for middle relief.

Finally, one last caveat before you commit yourself to a career in middle relief: no career middle reliever has ever been voted into the Hall of Fame.

Still interested?

Good.

Because baseball has a desperate need for a few good middle relievers.

"Middle relief is a very important role on any ballclub," Indians General Manager John Hart says. "When you look around at the other teams this year, you've seen a lot of cases where they've blown leads late in games. And that's where we've made our hay. The seventh and eighth inning is when you win or lose games."

Except with the Indians.

For most of this season, the seventh and eighth innings are when the Indians have won many of their games.

Why?

Good middle relief by them, and bad middle relief by their opponents.

"It's not a glamour job, but if you've got a good club, the middle relievers will get lots of work," says Indians Manager Mike Hargrove.

"Are middle relievers overlooked? Not on good teams," says Tribe pitching coach Mark Wiley. "Winning teams need to get to their closer with the lead, so you notice those guys in the middle more."

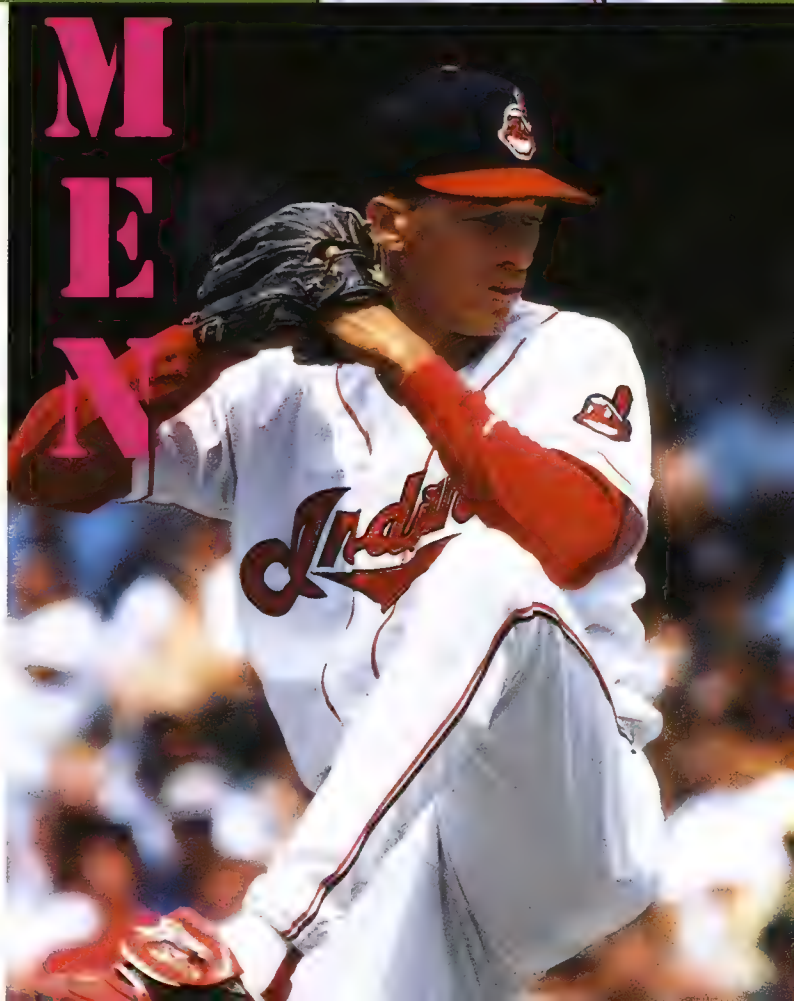
What's the definition of a middle reliever?

Generally speaking, it's a pitcher who is the bridge from when the starter runs out of gas until the ninth inning, when the closer takes over.

The middle reliever usually arrives in the seventh or eighth inning, with his team leading. His job is not to mess anything up until the closer arrives to pitch the ninth.

It's not as easy as it sounds.

"Finding people who can pitch the seventh and eighth innings for you and keep the situation in order







© Gregory Drezdson, both photos



"The last time I was here (as Tribe pitching coach from 1988-91)," says Wiley, "we had a major problem because we didn't have anyone to get us from our starters to (closer) Doug Jones. Back then, Jonesie would sometimes have to come into games in the seventh or eighth inning and finish the game to get a save."

Things have changed since then—and changed for the better.

Tribe middle relievers have performed almost flawlessly this season, allowing Hargrove to use Mesa in classic closer style, meaning for the last three outs of the game. It's the way managers always aspire to use their bullpen, but the way few of them do, simply because of a lack of quality middle relievers.

"We look at ourselves in the bullpen as a whole, not as individuals," Poole says. "Jose, as the closer, is our leader. We know that if we're doing our job, he's only going to have to pitch one inning. If we can do that consistently, it will keep him fresh for October."

Hargrove, who along with Wiley has adroitly orchestrated the Indians bullpen into the best bullpen in the league this season, knows better than anyone the value of putting Mesa into a position where he only has to worry about pitching one inning each time.

**"We look at ourselves in the bullpen as a whole, not as individuals. Jose as the closer, is our leader. We know that if we're doing our job, he's only going to have to pitch one-inning games. If we can do that consistently, it will keep him fresh for October." —Jim Poole**

"That's a tremendous advantage to have, because it keeps Jose fresher, and allows us to use him more often," Hargrove says.

"Having your closer pitch one inning is the ideal situation," Wiley says, "and the more times you can get your closer into an ideal situation, the better chance he has for success."

Finding good middle relievers isn't as easy as you might think. For a long time, middle relief was a dumping ground for pitchers who didn't have the stamina to be a starting pitcher, nor the unique combination of stuff and kamikaze mentality to be a closer.

Now, however, middle relief has become a legitimate sub-group within a Major League bullpen.



"What you look for," Hart says, "is a pitcher with two power pitches that he can throw for strikes. And they have to be durable, and able to maintain their stuff for two innings, two or three times a week."

There are some other qualifications as well.

"You need to have patience, because you might go five to seven days without pitching," Poole says. "You also have to be able to stay sharp, because you might only pitch to one or two batters in an outing, then go five more days without pitching."

An important branch of any group of middle relievers is the situational lefthander, a role both Poole and Assenmacher have filled this season.

"You need those lefthanders to come in to pitch to left-handed hitters who you know they (the opposition) won't pinch-hit for," Hargrove said. "Getting those hitters out late in games is very important."

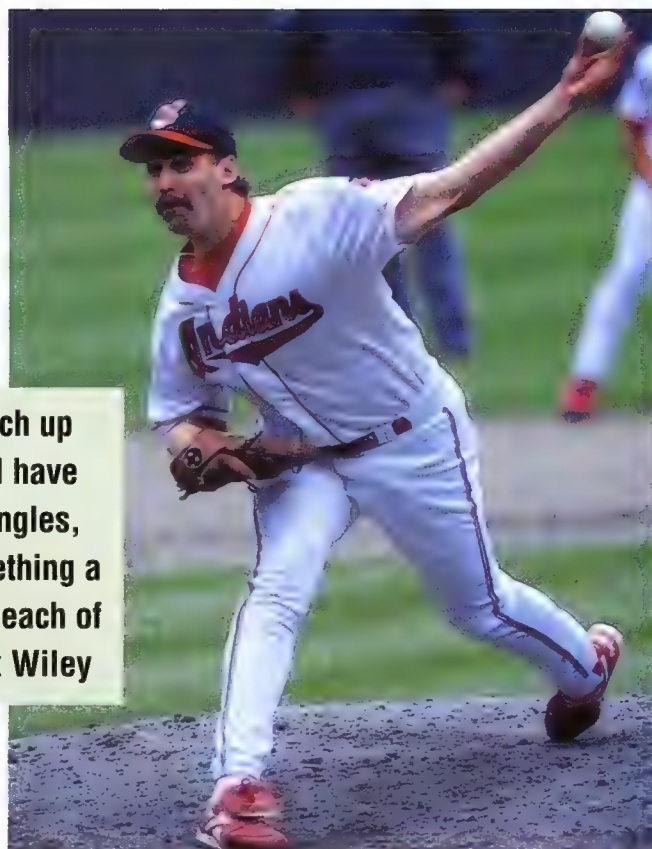
While Poole and Assenmacher frequently pitch less than one inning per outing, it's not unusual for right-handers Plunk and Tavaréz to work two full innings while serving as the bridge from the starter to Mesa.

"And the beauty there," Hart says, "is that Mike (Hargrove) can use Tavaréz for two innings one day and Plunk for two innings the next."

Wiley likes the diversity of the Tribes' middle relief corps.

"Our guys match up well," he says. "Tavaréz is not the same kind of pitcher as Plunk, and Assenmacher and Poole are different types of pitchers. They all may throw some of the same pitches, but they all have different arm angles, and there's something a little different in each of them."

**"Our guys match up well... They all have different arm angles, and there's something a little different in each of them." — Mark Wiley**



© Gregory Drezdson, both photos

Like where they came from.

Of the four, only Tavaréz is a homegrown product of the Indians farm system. At the start of the season he was the Tribe's top-rated pitching prospect. Instead of throwing him into the more pressurized role of being in the starting rotation as a rookie, Tavaréz was placed in the bullpen, where he could be gradually eased into a starting slot down the road—a method the Baltimore Orioles used for years with their pitching prospects during their glory days in the 70s and 80s.

Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, Tavaréz has pitched so effectively in middle relief, that Hargrove has been reluctant to move him out of that role when a spot in the rotation has opened up.

"There's no question Julian will be a starter at some point, but this year he's too valuable to us in the bullpen to move him," Hargrove said.

Poole was signed during spring training as a free agent, and he has been as reliable as he has been unheralded, as has Assenmacher, a quiet workhorse who has appeared in more Major League games in the 90s than any other pitcher.

Plunk is one of the veteran members of the Indians, having been with the Tribe since 1992, when he won nine games as a reliever. The next year he saved 15 games as part of the Tribe's closing-by-committee setup.



Continued on page 96



## MIDDLE MEN, Continued...

This year he has continued his work as one of the league's best setup men.

All four of the Tribe's "Men in the Middle" have another characteristic important to the role. They have enough stuff to get a key strikeout in a key situation.

"You need middle relievers who have a pitch they can strike hitters out with, because sometimes they are coming in to pitch to just that one hitter," Wiley says. "When you get two strikes on that hitter, you need to put him away."

Indeed, if there is one qualification that is most important for a middle reliever, it's that he gets to be on a first name basis with the strike zone.

"A good one needs to pound the strike zone," Wiley says, "because you don't want to walk anyone. A walk late in the game can kill you because it's an advantage for the other team, because they are trying to get base runners."

Indians middle relievers have done an outstanding job of keeping the number of base runners to a minimum from the time the starter leaves to the time Mesa arrives. And, indeed, it's no coincidence that Mesa is having one of the most efficient seasons any closer has ever had.

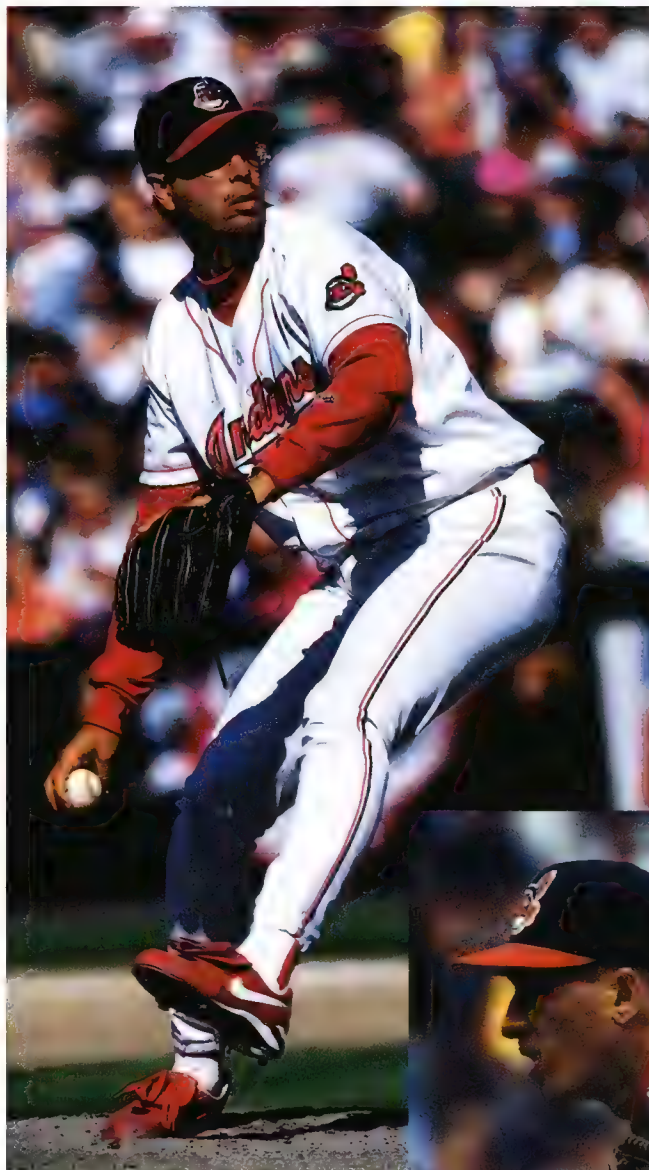
And that, in turn, has gone a long way toward contributing to the Indians win-loss record, which for most of the season has been the best in the Major Leagues. The starters get the victories, the closer gets the saves—and the middle relievers get a "way to go" from the manager.

But if you want to know which teams have the best middle relievers, check the standings.

"Middle relief has become a very important role over the last few years," Hart says. "Without our setup guys, we're not as competitive. Bad ballclubs don't have the bridge guys."

Good ballclubs have the bridge guys—and sometimes the bridge guys DO get their names in the paper.

Plunk won nine games in middle relief three years ago. This year, Tavaréz has been one of the winningest



pitchers on the staff.

"We've won so many games late this year that our middle relievers sometimes end up getting wins, too. They're not just protecting leads," Wiley says.

"We haven't lost many times late in games," Hart says. "And that's a tribute to our middle relievers as much as it is to Jose."

And, of course, you never know where your next closer might come from. Last year's middle reliever sometimes becomes next year's closer.

Just ask Mesa.



© Gregory Drezdson, both photos



## CLEVELAND INDIANS CHARITIES

Cleveland Indians Charities was established in 1989 with the purpose of making a Major League impact in the areas of youth education and recreation. Through fund raising events such as the CIC Golf Classic, Stop-n-Shop's SpringFest, Jacobs Field tours, the CIC Luncheon Series and several concourse game booths, nearly \$500,000 has been raised for numerous organizations in northeast Ohio during the past six years. Some organizations and programs that benefit from CIC's efforts are: Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland, Luke Easter Park, the Community Fund for Assisting Missing Youth (A.M.Y.), Shoes for Kids, Rookie League, Larry Doby RBI, Cleveland Indians Academy, United Way, the United Negro College Fund, Cleveland Baseball Federation and Esperanza, Inc.

## SOCIETY BANK CHARITABLE COMPLIMENTARY TICKET PROGRAM

The Indians and Society Bank have teamed up to provide the Charitable Complimentary Ticket Program in Cleveland, which provides tickets for select Indians games to non-profit organizations that assist youths, disabled and senior citizens throughout north-east Ohio. Over 42,000 tickets have been awarded during the past five years. Please write to the Indians Community Relations Department for more details.

## ESPERANZA, INC.

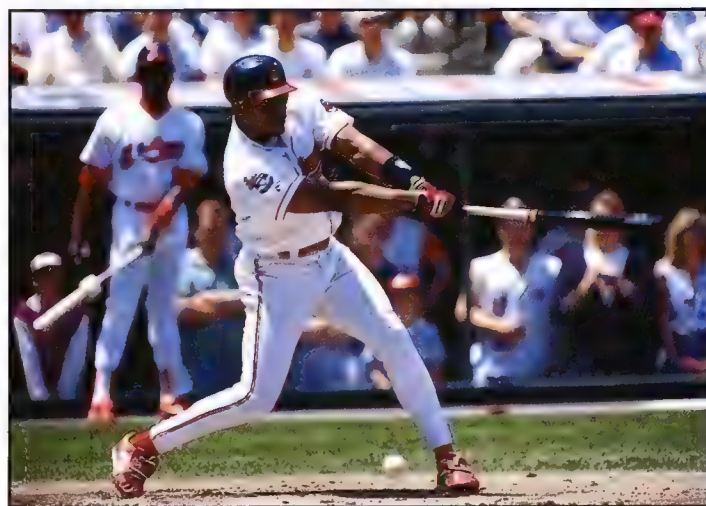
The Indians have found a partner in the Hispanic community by working with Esperanza, an organization dedicated to the educational enrichment of Hispanic youths in Greater Cleveland. Second baseman Carlos Baerga has personally donated a college scholarship for the past three years to a deserving student at the annual Fiesta of Hope Scholarship Luncheon. This year's Fiesta of Hope Luncheon celebration was held on June 23. Please call 651-7178 for more information about the program.

## LARRY DOBY RBI PROGRAM

The Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program, **presented by SportsChannel** and supported by Continental Airlines, continues to grow. Last summer it was officially renamed after Indians alumnus Larry Doby. In its third year, the league provides urban youths with an opportunity to learn and play baseball. The league extends

past that goal and stresses positive self-esteem, attendance, sportsmanship and positive life skills.

Games are played at League Park. With help from United Black Fund, local and national sponsors, the program includes play-off games, tournaments and an RBI World Series trip for the All-Stars to a Major League city.



Credit: Gregory Dreidzon

## UNITED WAY HOME RUN DERBY

This annual program enlists corporate support for each home run hit during the season by the United Way Home Run Derby player chairman. For doing what he does best, Albert Belle has helped raise more than \$108,000 in four years for United Way through the Home Run Derby program. In eight years, Tribe sluggers have been instrumental in raising more than \$200,000 for United Way's area programs and services.





by Brian M. Love

It all began on two separate continents, in two separate countries, in two separate communities. A little over 26 years ago, two young boys held a baseball bat for the first time. Each one had their first catch on a sunny day. It was then that Alvaro Espinoza and Wayne Kirby both embarked on their long, tumultuous journeys to "The Show."

Indians fans who have followed the Tribe know that these two players are extremely valuable to the chemistry and success of the team. What fans don't know is that a key substitution role is very difficult to do and do well. After a combined 21 years in the Minor League Farm Systems, Wayne and Espy finally emerged as two of the more consistent utility players in the Majors. That is what makes these two guys so special. Both were starters at one point in their pro careers, and now they are in a position which often calls for a "crunch time" performance.

"They are constantly ready to play," says All-Star outfielder Manny Ramirez. "The team has a lot of confidence in them. Whenever they are asked to come in and perform, they do."

The reason for that confidence is the attitude these two men bring to the team. Manager Mike Hargrove and First Base Coach Davey Nelson both agree that Kirby and Espinoza both have an outstanding work ethic twinned with a loose attitude.

"They keep the ballclub loose as well as keeping things in perspective," Hargrove commented. "They are indispensable to the team because they have very good skills and have paid their dues."

"They are the ideal utility players and both Wayne and Espy realize that this is their role on the team."

"Wayne and Espy are both talented players and they make our bench a lot stronger," adds Nelson. "But, those two guys are crazy. They keep our team really loose."

All joking aside, both players not only keep the team loose, they contribute when it counts. In 58 starts for the Tribe in 1994, Espinoza had 35 starts at shortstop, 13 at third base, and 10 at second. The Indians were 34-24 when Alvaro was in the starting lineup. In addition to 42 starts for Kirby, he led the Indians with five pinch-hits. One of those pinch hits was a home run.

It is evident that Grover and Dave Nelson were

© Gregory Drezdron

## A "Super Sub" Combination...

correct in their assessment of these utility workhorses. It is also evident that the game of baseball is what has kept them going all these years.

"The game has kept me motivated after all those years in the minors," Kirby claims. "One day you can be on top of the world, and the next, you can be in an 0-20 slump. That's what makes this game what it is."

Espy agrees.

"In baseball, you never know. It was very difficult being a starter and then having to sit the bench waiting for my turn to play. But I know my role with the team, and it makes me work that much harder. In baseball, there's always another chance."

Alvaro Alberto Espinoza began his Major League career with the Houston Astros minor league affiliate in Sarasota in 1979. He hit a combined .217 in his first two seasons and did not even play in 1981. Despite his offensive numbers, Espy unleashed the leather in the Gulf Coast League by leading all shortstops in assists (217), double plays (33), and total chances (356). He did all of this in only his second year in the league. It was apparent that Espinoza deserved to be in professional baseball.

Espinoza signed as a free agent with the Astros

**"They keep the ballclub loose as well as keeping things in perspective. They are indispensable to the team because they have very good skills and have paid their dues..."**  
— Mike Hargrove



in 1978 straight out of Pedro Gual High School in Venezuela. It was in high school where his work ethic was developed and nurtured. As a three sport athlete, Espy understood the importance of practicing and working hard.

"I played three sports in high school mostly to stay out of trouble, but my goal was baseball."

Well, he reached that goal as he proceeded to move from the Astros organization to the Minnesota Twins and then to the New York Yankees where he finally arrived at his destination—"The Show."

"I had the best three years of my career in New York," Espinoza recalls. "I had a lot of fun and that's where I became a starter."

Alvaro was having so much fun that before he knew it, he was making his pitching debut against the Chicago White Sox. On August 6, 1991, Espy faced Tim Lincecum and Robin Ventura in the eighth inning with two men on base.

"They are two guys you don't want to face if you're pitching for the first time," joked Espinoza.

He got Lincecum to fly out and Ventura to ground out.

Wayne Kirby's journey was a little different.

Kirby began his amateur career at Newport News Apprentice School, where he played baseball and basketball. He played football, basketball, and baseball at Tabb High School in Virginia and, after graduating in 1982, he just waited.

"I always dreamed of playing pro ball, but I didn't know if I could make the adjustment," Kirby remembered while wrapping pre-game tape around his wrists.

He found out how to make the adjustment soon enough after hearing the news that he had been drafted by the Los Angeles Dodgers. His professional career began at Bradenton where he batted .292 in 60 games—he made the adjustment. In 1984, he saw action at Vero Beach, Great Falls, and Bakersfield where he hit a combined .304 with 42 RBI's and 38 stolen bases. Kirby spent 12 seasons in the minors playing for teams in Bradenton, Vero Beach, Great Falls, Bakersfield, San Antonio, Albuquerque, Colorado Springs, and Charlotte.

When asked about becoming discouraged, Wayne only chimed in again to say, "The game has kept me motivated."

"Baseball is a game of mental toughness," he continued. "What makes baseball different is that you always have to stay focused. You always have to be thinking."

Although Wayne is very focused, he also sees himself and Espy as joksters.

"I'm always joking. I try to keep the guys loose so they play to win, and play to have fun," Kirby said.

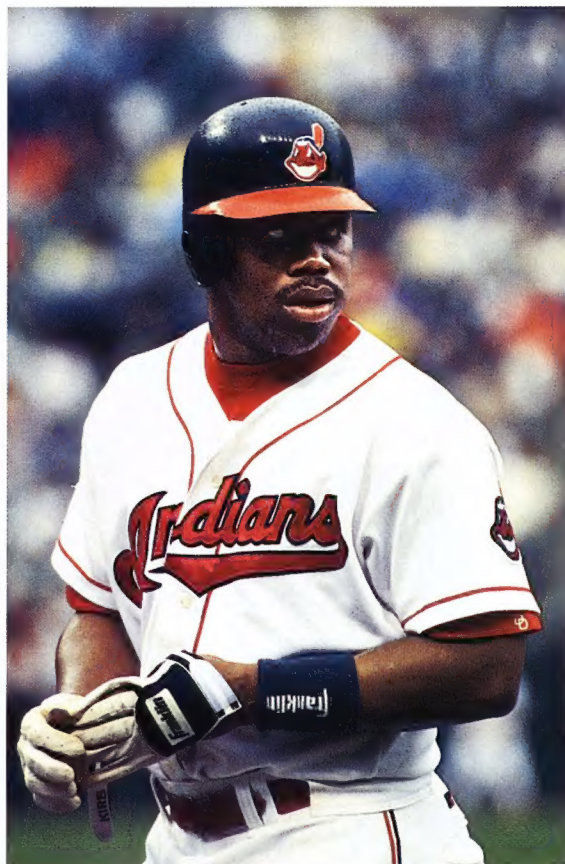
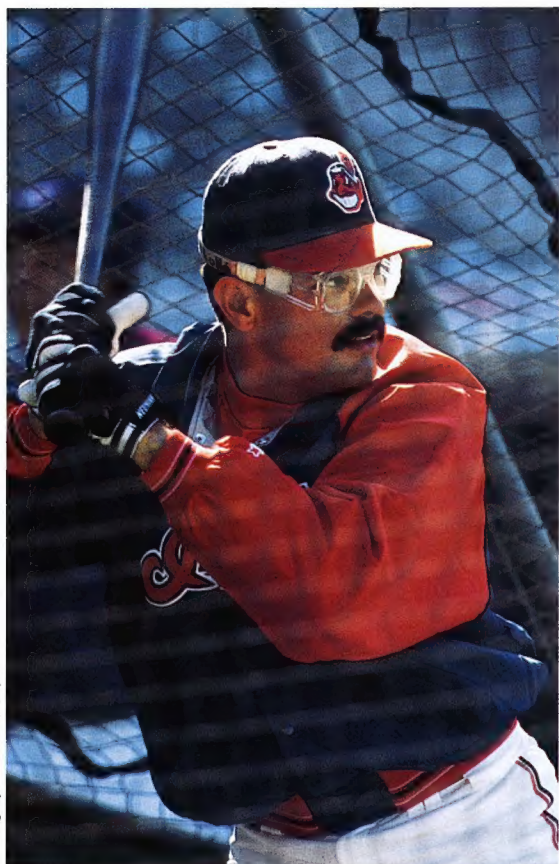
Wayne displayed his focus last year on April 4 when he stepped to the plate in the bottom of the eleventh inning against Seattle reliever Kevin King. With the crowd roaring and the sun shining down on the newly cut grass of Jacobs Field, Kirby ripped the game-winning single into left field.

"That was my most memorable hit," Kirby recalls.

Although Espinoza's most cherished hit was not quite as dramatic, it came off one of the best finesse pitchers in the game.

"My first hit was off Tommy John when I was still in Minnesota," he reminisces. "It was one of the best feelings in the world."

For one of the best "super sub" combinations in the game, there should be many memorable moments to come.





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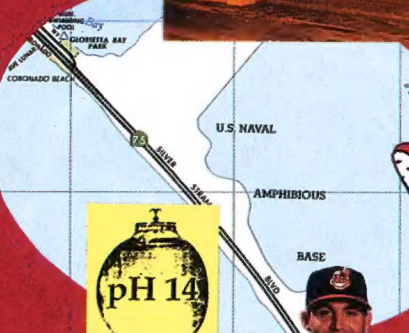




Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon



Team	Pos.	1	2
Rightfielder	9	4-6	BB
2nd Baseman	4	3	4FO
1st Baseman	3	8	SF
Centerfielder			7
Designated Hitter			2
Leftfielder			
Catcher			
3rd Baseman			
Shortstop			
Pitcher			
TOTAL			



# Round the Bases

By Rick Zimmerman

Feel like taking a run 'round the bases?  
Each of the items pictured here has the  
word "base" or its sound in its name.  
See if you can tag them all  
and head for home!

Answers on Page 16.



Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon

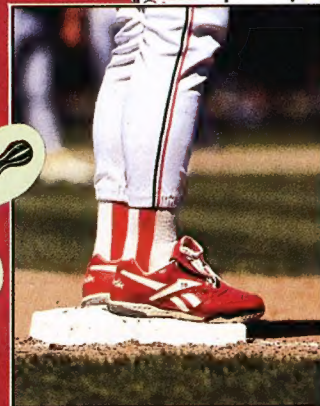
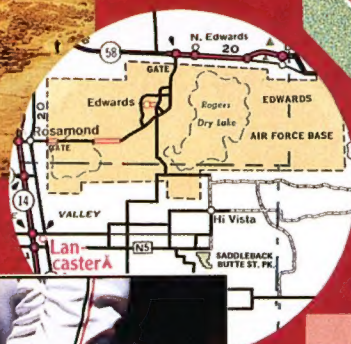
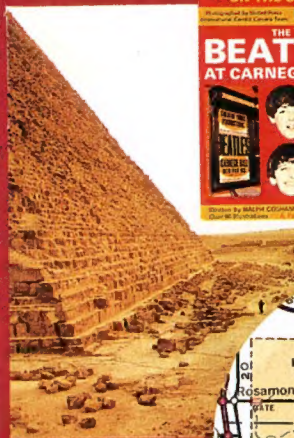


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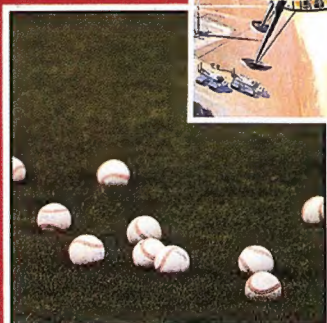
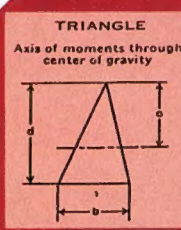


Photo Credit: Gregory Drezdzon

